

## **CLAIM AMENDMENTS**

1.(Cancelled)

2.(Cancelled)

3.(Cancelled)

4.(Cancelled)

5.(Withdrawn) The back support apparatus as in Claim 1,

wherein each bladder has at least one inflation chamber which is inflatable and deflatable independent of other inflation chambers.

6.(Withdrawn) The back support apparatus as in Claim 1,

wherein each bladder has an inflation chamber communicably connected to the inflation chamber of the other bladder by at least one bridge conduit.

7.(Withdrawn) The back support apparatus as in Claim 6,

wherein the at least one bridge conduit has an inflated diameter less than an inflated diameter of each bladder.

1 8.(Withdrawn) The back support apparatus as in Claim 1,  
2 wherein each bladder has at least two inflation chambers, each inflation chamber  
3 communicably connected to a corresponding inflation chamber of the other bladder by a  
4 corresponding at least one bridge conduit to form at least two support sections, each  
5 support section being inflatable and deflatable independent of other support sections.5.

1 9.(Currently amended) A backpack system for reinforceably supporting a user's  
2 back, said backpack having a front panel comprising a back-facing surface  
3 supporting a right and a left shoulder strap, extending downwardly from a right  
4 and a left upper attachment point, said backpack system comprising:  
5 a backpack having a front panel;

6 a pair of elongated inflatable vertically oriented bladders spaced generally  
7 parallel to each other and separated by a gap space containing no vertically  
8 oriented bladder, said vertically oriented bladders being positioned so that said  
9 gap space overlies a vertical central axis of said front panel, said vertically  
10 oriented bladders each having an upper terminus extending upwardly at least as  
11 high as said right and left upper attachment point and the gap space being aligned  
12 over the user's spinal column said pair of elongated inflatable vertically oriented  
13 bladders each having a lower terminus and a midpoint half way between said  
14 upper terminus and said lower terminus;

15 means for vertically connecting said pair of vertically oriented bladders to  
16 the front panel of said backpack to provide cushioned back support on opposite

17 sides of a user's spinal column along at least a thoracic region thereof when said  
18 backpack is carried on the user's back;  
19 an upper bridge conduit positioned between said pair of vertically oriented  
20 bladders conducting air between said bladders, said upper bridge conduit being  
21 positioned between said upper terminus and said midpoint;  
22 a lower bridge conduit positioned between said pair of vertically oriented  
23 bladders conducting air between said bladders, said lower bridge conduit being  
24 positioned between said lower terminus and said midpoint;  
25 means for inflating said pair of vertically oriented bladders; and  
26 means for deflating said pair of vertically oriented bladders.

10.(Currently amended) The back support apparatus as in claim 9,  
wherein said pair of vertically oriented bladders are spaced at most two  
inches from each other.

11.(Currently amended) The back support apparatus as in claim 9,  
wherein said pair of vertically oriented bladders are spaced to exert a  
support force against the user's spinal column from opposite sides thereof when  
said backpack is carried on the user's back.

12.(Currently amended) The back support apparatus as in claim 9,

wherein each vertically oriented bladder has an inflated diameter of at most two inches.

13.(Withdrawn) The backpack system as in Claim 9,

wherein each bladder has at least one inflation chamber which is inflatable and deflatable independent of other inflation chambers.

14.(Cancelled)

15.(Currently amended) The back support apparatus as in claim ~~14~~ 9,

wherein the upper and lower bridge conduits have an inflated diameter less than an inflated diameter of each vertically oriented bladder.

1 16.(Withdrawn) The backpack system as in Claim 9,

2 wherein each bladder has at least two inflation chambers, each inflation chamber  
3 communicably connected to a corresponding inflation chamber of the other bladder by a  
4 corresponding at least one bridge conduit to form at least two support sections, with each  
5 support section being inflatable and deflatable independent of other support sections.

1 17.(Currently amended) The back support apparatus as in claim 9,

2                    wherein said means for vertically connecting said pair of vertically  
3                    oriented bladders to the front panel of said backpack includes a second panel  
4                    connected to said front panel to form an interstitial volume therebetween, said  
5                    interstitial volume for retainably receiving said pair of vertically oriented  
6                    bladders therein.